

PROJECT REVIEW

## PLAYING FROM THE INSIDE Holistic Villages as a Paradigm

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### ABSTRACT

In 1958, Corbu advocated a 'new architecture' for a 'new man'. The omnipresence of the architect creating spaces to model a society led to architects building many sins. After that the influence of architecture in the lives of its inhabitants began to be a subject ignored. A lot of contemporary architecture limited itself to the production of design or service to capital of the day.

In 1958, Yona Friedman fought for a mobile architecture in his visionary manifestos, in which megastructures over existing cities allowed citizens to reconfigure their lives. The development of utopias that decided to act from 'outside' or 'above' the societies led architecture to lose their focus and social responsibility. We now find this position in the nostalgia for designs that could only be built by robots.

It was also in 1958 that Tomás Maldonado defended new developments in training designers from the spoon to the city. The breadth of his scientific focus distanced many generations from the social problems of design, remaining in the dichotomy between functionalism-aestheticism that could only be improved by a solid methodological base. Today we would call it parametric.

Exactly half a century later, after winning the competition for the Vienna University of Economics I was conscious that none of the extreme abovementioned positions were going to give me the answers I needed for the integral project that I knew we had to develop. This is the Holistic History of an Urban Miracle and the Holistic Villages as a New Paradigm.

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### INTRODUCTORY STATEMENTS

*To believe in Urban 'Miracles'!*

Tell me, when you were a child were you allowed to play in the street?

Autobiographical details mark our thinking and our actions. I am convinced that the work I do is shaping society and that often makes me aware that I must constantly feed my curiosity with images and experiences from all over the world. How people from different cultures spend their time in society is my definition of URBANITY. Building living

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spaces as an integral designer, I must permanently tame the INNER CHILD we all have inside of us, in order to be open to other ways of experiencing the multiple realities that exist. The key for me has always been to link space with TIME, which is what leads us to understand that everything changes, and what is important is to be sensitive and recognize the POTENTIAL that we must awaken in people so that they can relate to it and evolve.

Going back to the question. I was not allowed to play alone in the street because I lived much of my

childhood under military dictatorships in Argentina. Nowadays, I live in a city where everyone takes ‘pride’ in not playing in the street because that is what foreign immigrants do. In my work as a holistic architect, I am constantly confronted by PRIVATIZED public space that obviously nobody wants to pay for, and which in our globalized culture is marked by Big Brother and the fear of what is different.

It was very interesting when I was interviewing the protagonists for a film I made about Campus WU in Vienna, who all interacted in the conception and realization of the largest University of Economics and Business in the European Union. I asked them the same question to kick off the dialogue. Economists, architects, politicians and other people from different cultures helped create this MIRACLE, each of them complementing the other with their NOSTALGIA to give birth to a place for FREEDOM.

The miracle was that everyone was ready to share

the vision of creating a huge university park which would be open 24/7 for everyone. It is a park that overcomes all preconceptions; where over-stretched economy students cross paths with visitors to the popular Prater amusement park, with hoards of football fans who drink beer on our campus as well as international tourists trying to get a selfie in front of architecture from the ‘Star System’.

But, be careful. Don’t think that we have overcome the ‘60s and everyone respects pedestrians or that investors have suddenly discovered that they want to be patrons who BRING MORE LAUGHTER into society. When we won the competition for the Masterplan Campus WU we had no budget for the 70,000 m<sup>2</sup> university park, nobody in the city had thought about the impact of having 30,000 intruders in a neighbourhood of 100,000 people, and of course there was no facility manager to set limits, for example by pointing out that having a university open

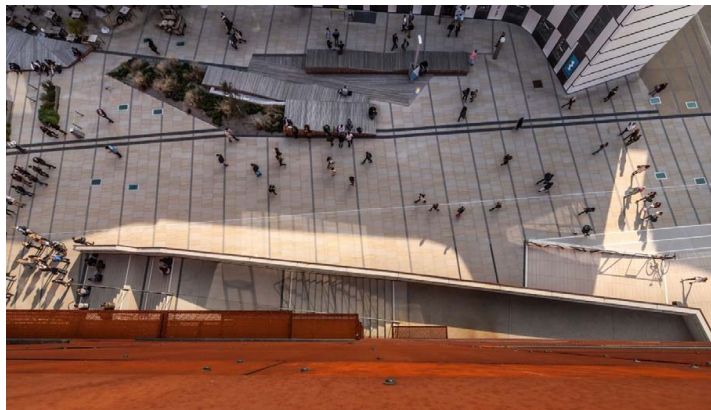


Image 01: The new Campus WU at the pedestrian cross street opposite Forum Square

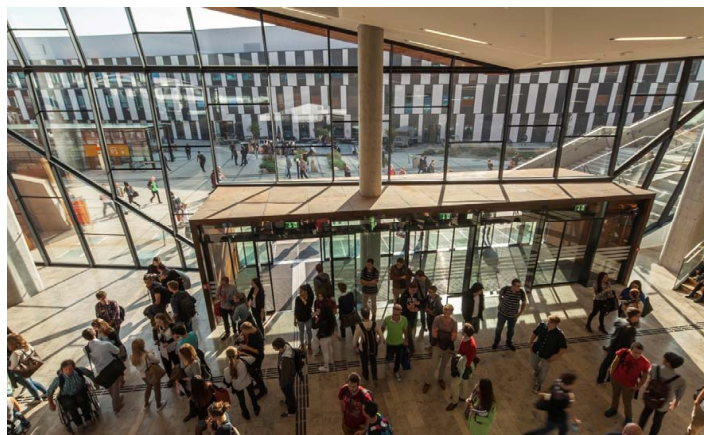


Image 02: The new Campus WU from the Teaching Centre lecture theatre, looking towards Forum Square

to society would result in maintenance and security costs that were higher than those for a mega building with an indoor academic life.

I think it's extremely important that someone moderates the process and sets up a Hannah Arendt 'table' in order to interrelate interests and allow the process to bring about COMMUNITY. In this case, it was an anthroposophic Latin American woman dreaming of a better world who managed to wake up the perceived enemies —ECONOMISTS— to the belief that public space was the added value, in order to change perspectives so that we could RETHINK ECONOMY.

1. Arendt, Hannah (1958). *The Human Condition*, University Press, Chicago, 1958

In the last few years I have travelled extensively around the world presenting this project, which has not just stayed on paper, but through the efforts of thousands of people has transformed into a contemporary space which is driving the economy and culture in Vienna. It is not a space which is merely a baroque jewel but a PROCESS that this city was encouraged to start. I must say in answer to your question that I'm frightened by the housing speculation bubble which is destroying all of the values that I am talking about in terms of building the RES PUBLICA of the twenty-first century. I find hope in initiatives such as the Landscape Law in Chile, Flower Power Neighbourhood Movements in Australia or the new



Image 03: The Campus WU as a residual area between Prater Park and the Vienna Fair Grounds  
© Rendering BOAnet

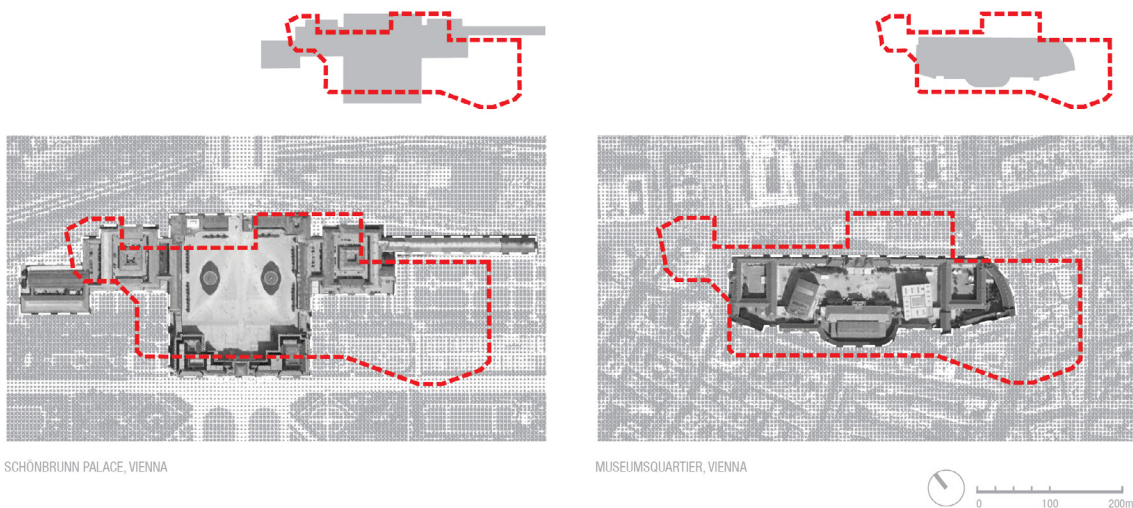


Image 04: Comparative scale: Left: the Vatican, Rome. Right: Museumsquartier, Vienna  
© Graph BUSarchitektur



American generations in Washington who do not want the American dream.  
We are learning to see and to believe again.  
It's worth encouraging creation from within!

*About the Case Study*

*The new Vienna University of Economics*

The University's expectations for its new campus far exceeded that of simply building a set of new buildings on a single site. The reinvention of the education landscape was to be the first step in encouraging a new multicultural and cosmopolitan beginning through architecture. As Masterplan Director, I had to create the game rules for a very interesting symbiosis between first-class signature architecture and the highest ecological standards. Consequently, world-renowned architecture and green building were the sine qua non conditions for the integral Masterplan in an area that sought to bring about a paradigm change for both students and teachers as well as for

the surrounding neighbourhood. I am referring to a place where real human communication in harmony with the environment had to make a mark on everyday life so that learning and research on the Campus WU could become much more than an obligatory exercise. For these reasons, we decided to create multiple paths of discovery and squares for meeting to accompany everyday academic pursuits in the university park.

Intense work with the teams from the Vienna University of Economics and Business (WU) and the BundesImmobilienGesellschaft (BIG, Federal Real Estate Agency) allowed us to harmonize the international superstar architects' innovative proposals with the desires of the WU population. From this, worlds emerged that were extremely different from everyday academic life and proved stimulating assets for research and teaching on the Campus WU, making it possible to perhaps allow scientists to reinterpret the role of twenty-first century economists as our client desired.

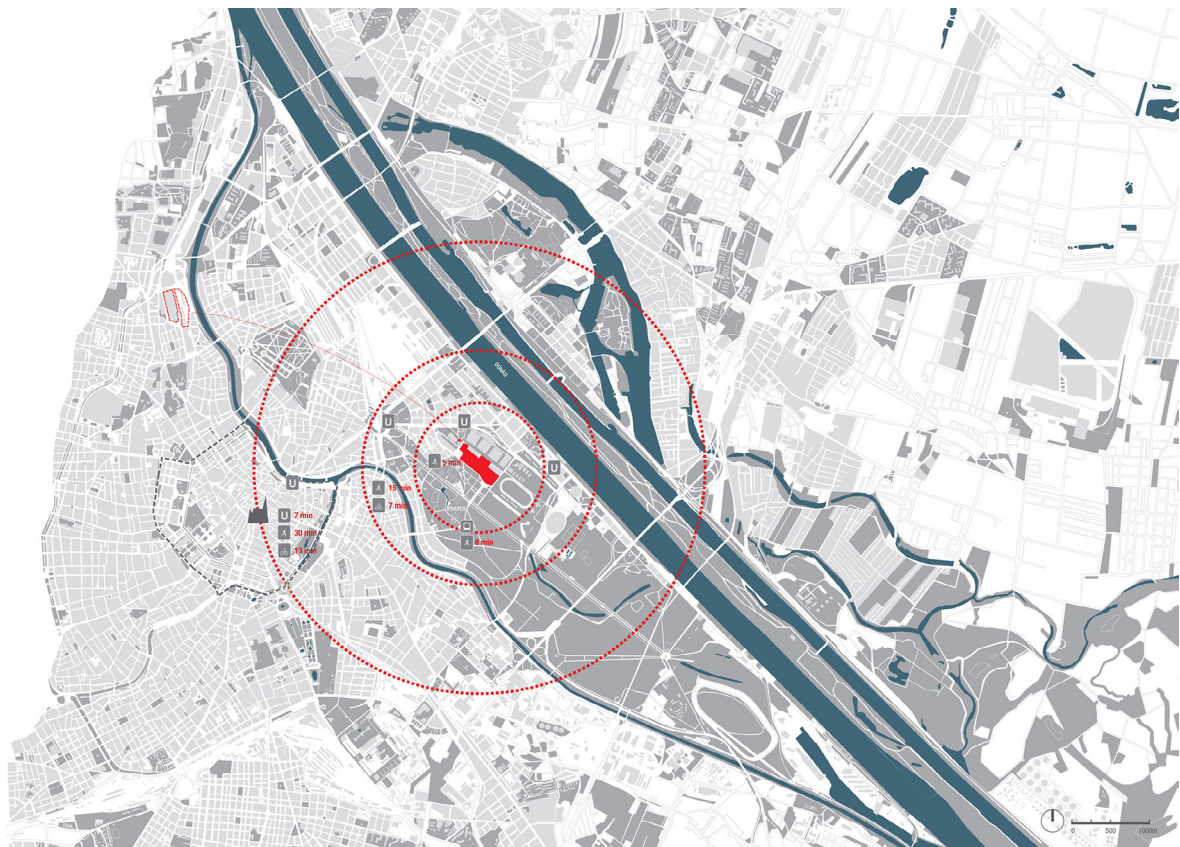


Image 05: Relocation of the Vienna University of Economics and Business  
© Map BUSarchitektur

Creating an awareness that 30,000 guests had to enrich a neighbourhood with 100,000 inhabitants was the goal of the intense work with the City of Vienna through the Environment Project team, which had representatives of all the relevant departments of the Municipality and the neighbourhood. As an urbanist, I believe that the integral complementarity of the many small steps taken by the public administration and the University of Economics and Business created synergies focused both on the Prater Park and on the Leopoldstadt district, allowing new neighbourhoods to emerge.

Understanding the Campus WU as a Holistic History, for all project architects, experts and consultants who left their mark on the project, meant being convinced that through complementary and integral team work we could get the spaces for the New Vienna University of Economics and Business to attain their maximum potential for the quality of life of the WU community and the city's population.

The time it takes for thousands of students and teachers to appropriate the space will surprise us for many years as an unexpected reality promises to be much more attractive than its promised potential. The Campus WU was conceived as a multi-optional space that will have room for the self-determination of each individual and of the university community collectively.

## HYPOTHESIS AND DEBATE

### *Reflections on the New Reality*

#### *Learning from the Campus WU on its 3rd anniversary*

The area between the fairground and Prater Park has belonged to the students and teachers of the WU since 2013, as well as to all those who are curious and open about discoveries of all kinds. In just four years six exceptional buildings have been constructed on an area of approximately 90,000 m<sup>2</sup>, each of them with

the stamp of their creators, all renowned international architects. The buildings are located in a carefully-conceived area of multiple open spaces. Students and teachers love the varied Campus WU, they make the most of it and use it, they have made it their own in a very short time and they take pleasure in their enjoyment of it. A new sector of the city has emerged, full of vitality. The specialist press has also been flattering: Vienna has a new landmark. According to the Planning Director of the City of Vienna, 'the new WU is the driving force to bring new value to an area



Image 06: Opening of the Campus WU in the Central Library by Zaha Hadid



Image 07: Open Day at the Vienna University of Economics and Business (2013)



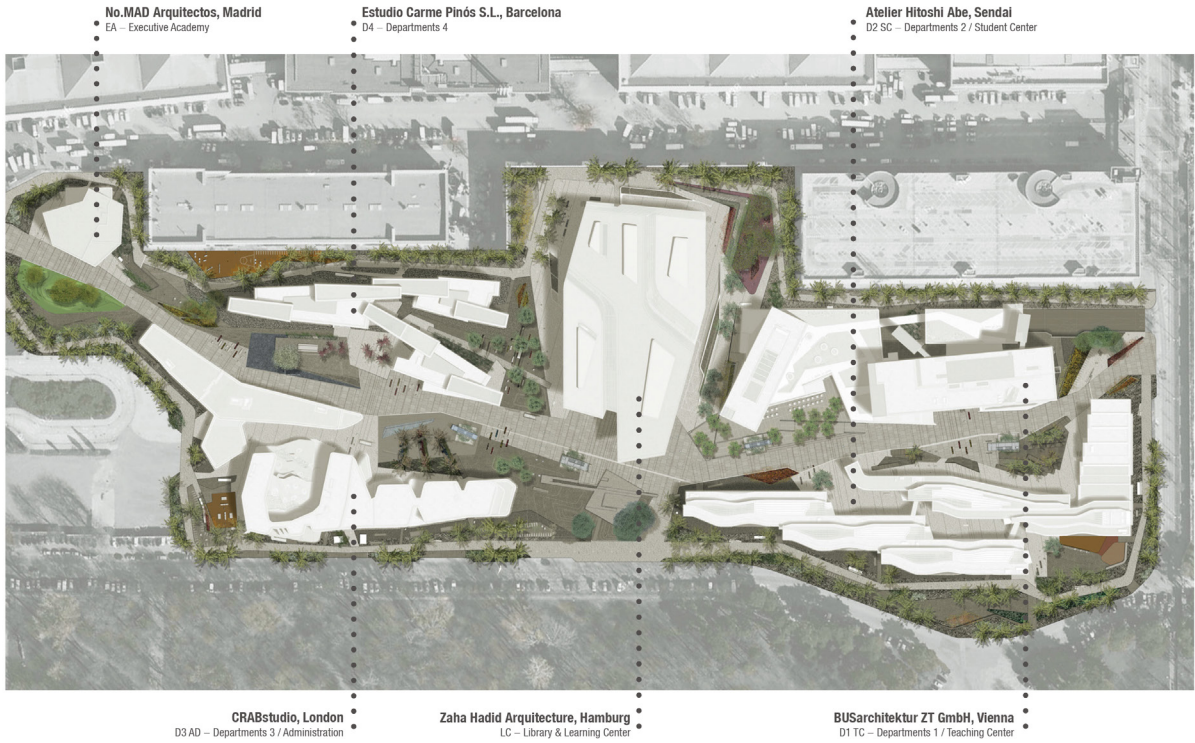


Image 08: Local and international architectural styles are intertwined in the university park  
© Graph BOAnet



Image 09: The pedestrian cross street, looking towards Stage Square

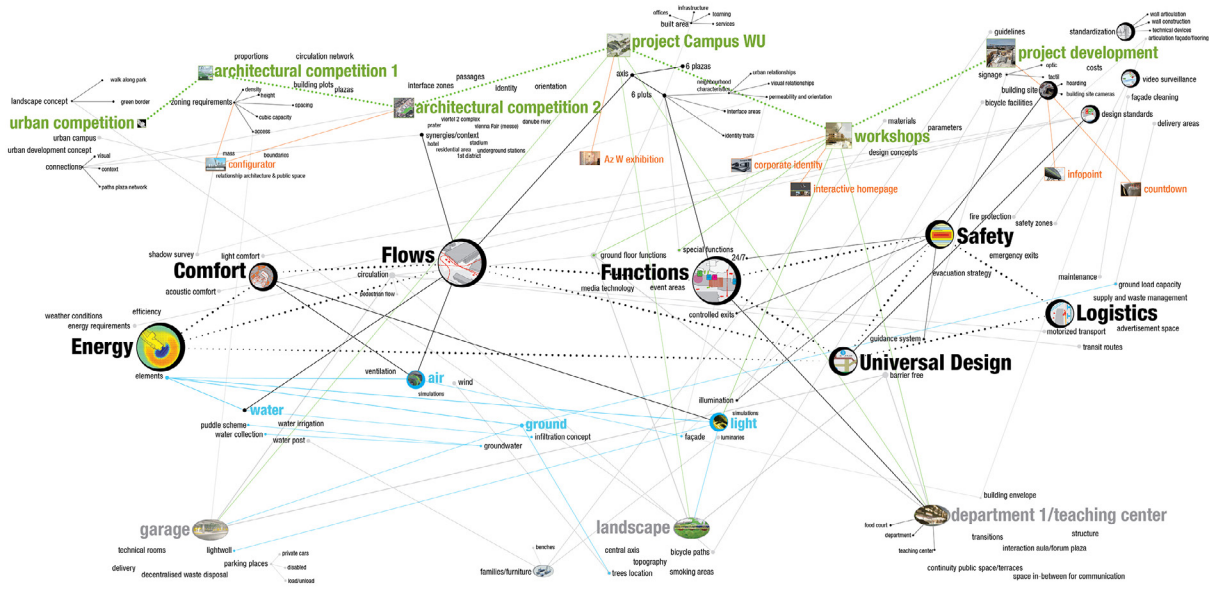


Image 10: Masterplan of the Campus WU as gravitational synergies  
© Graph BOAnet

of the city along the River Danube that had fallen asleep. With the Campus WU new architectural and urban standards have undoubtedly been set in Vienna and also in the world.<sup>2</sup>

### Local and Global in Transnational and Innovative Branding

To paraphrase Patrick Geddes<sup>3</sup> and his ‘Think global, act local’ concept, the new campus for the Vienna University of Economics is a solid and consistent example of how local and international architecture firms can work together to overcome cultural, traditional or individualist habits. As internationally renowned project architects and experts were integrated into the framework of rules and recommendations of the Masterplan for the WU campus, the challenge of how to create a coherent, harmonious spatial unit that could be recognized as a whole arose, with an emphasis on the role of the public space as an interface for communication and exchange.

Zaida Muxí writes ‘The basis of Campus is the importance given to the non-built-up space, similar to

2. Madreiter, Thomas (2014) Director of Planning of the City of Vienna in nominating Laura P. Spinadel for the J.C. Nichols Prize for Visionaries in Urban Development of the ULI Urban Land Institute.

3. Geddes, Patrick (1915). *Cities in Evolution*. London, Williams & Norgate.

an Egon Schiele painting in which a figure is defined by the VOID it acquires, thereby becoming the focus of the artistic composition. The main focus of Campus WU has been the apparently empty space, which defines the rules for the arrangement of the buildings and, in turn, the interactions between everything happening inside them.<sup>4</sup>

The potential for CoOpetition<sup>5</sup> (the balance between competition and cooperation) and other topics covered in the Masterplan were interpreted by Ila Berman and Mona El Khafif as Multiscalar Negotiations, this being the common denominator used in all levels of the project both in the design phases and in the implementation process.

‘The full realization of the Master Plan and its six architectural projects—designed by Estudio Carne Pinós [Barcelona], CRABstudio [London], Zaha Hadid Architects [Hamburg], NO.MAD Arquitectos [Madrid], Atelier Hitoshi Abe [Sendai] and BUSarchitektur [Vienna]—occurred over a five-year period through an intricately managed choreography that can be summarized in relation to critical frameworks, processes and/or methodologies—

4. Muxi Martinez, Zaida (2013). *The University Space as a Space for Society. Campus WU, A Holistic History*. Vienna, Austria: Edited by BOA office for advanced randomness.

5. Suber, Peter (1990) *The Paradox of Self-Amendment: A Study of Logic, Law, Omnipotence, and Change*.





Image 11: Actions on the highest most accessible point of the Library by Zaha Hadid



Image 12: Recognition from the WU with the Gold Ring of Honour awarded to Laura P. Spinadel

understood as ‘lines of action’ or ‘handlungsstränge’— that organized and directed the project.’<sup>6</sup>

The greatest achievement and most complex aspect of the Masterplan can be seen in its attempt to make the majority of the architectures and the campus itself show the University’s new image, to maintain its reputation as a byword for innovation. ‘In other words, it was a good place to generate an innovative business model for a new university structure.’<sup>7</sup>

6. Berman, Ila & El Khafif, Mona (2013). Multi-Scalar Negotiations: Masterplan as a Mediator. Campus WU, A Holistic History. Vienna, Austria: Editor BOA office for advanced randomness.

7. Skene Catling, Charlotte (2014). *Sextet in the City: Vienna University’s Starchitect Campus. The architectural Review*. May 2014, 1407. Volume CCXXXVI. London: EMAP Publishing Limited.

## **THEMATIC MODULES**

*Rethinking the economy as a premise of the user/client*

### **HOW TO ATTAIN THE AURA OF VALUE?**

*I am convinced that when we all move to this new campus, we will first have to fill it with the life that the architecture promises...*

*Christoph Badelt – WU Rector (2013)*

If we understand architecture as ‘the art and the technique of projecting, designing, building and modifying the human habitat’, we come face to face with the first determining factor of the Campus WU project that demanded a rethinking of the architect’s work. The University had begun a process to redefine its own goals as a result of the decision to build its new





Image 13: Study Centre and Central Library by Zaha Hadid Architects  
© Rendering Methanoia

spaces. The conclusion was reached that economics, in the way it was being taught, had come to a dead end and had to be rethought. It had been recognized that the resultant autism of researching in an academic ivory tower had distanced scientists from the society that they ultimately worked for. Consequently, the role sought in looking for an architect to develop the Masterplan was not only to give the university a new corporate image but also to reinsert it socially and culturally in the local and international community. ‘The WU wants to be an active part of the urban life of the city of Vienna.’<sup>8</sup>

The mission therefore proposed by University users placed trust in architecture and urbanism as enablers of their own redefinition goals. In this context, it is very interesting to think, as Mario Pricken suggests, ‘that the really valuable objects to which people assign great importance have a unique and fascinating biography.’<sup>9</sup>

The story of how the Campus WU came into being is one that moves us and I would like to tell the story with all the passion it entails.

For all those involved who administered and worked with me in the development of the Campus WU masterplan the project has a unique emotional value. The university rector Christoph Badelt<sup>10</sup> and

8. Various authors (2007) Terms and conditions of the urban competition for the overall project of the new Vienna University of Economics.

9. Pricken, Mario (2014) *Die Aura des Wertvollen*. Editorial Publicis Publishing, Erlangen.

10. Dr. Christoph Badelt is a specialist in Social Economics and currently president of WIFO Austrian Institute of Economic Research, considered the main economics think tank in Austria.

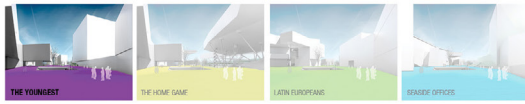
vice-rector Michael Holoubek<sup>11</sup> deliberately selected stakeholders who stated having emotional ties to the new university.

The managers designated by the WU and BIG in charge of a 500 million euro project had not yet turned thirty. Both for Christoph Sommer of the WU and for Max Pammer of BIG, the project became a source of pride for their families who accompanied them at all times. ‘We sought to make real the idea that came out of a vision, but now the campus must develop by itself, and the people must appropriate it and make it theirs. And as we have seen in these first days, many things are not being used as we had imagined. But that is precisely what is interesting, and so we release the project to observe how it will continue to grow and take shape. It is my wish that the campus should now find its own way.’<sup>12</sup>

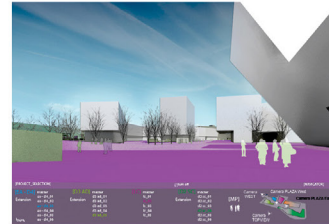
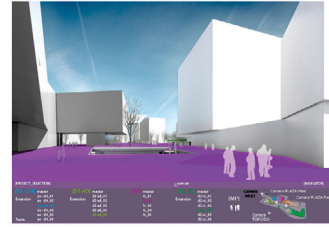
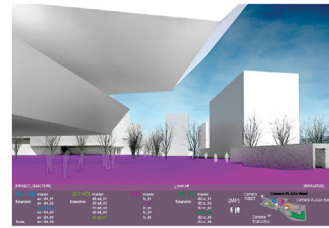
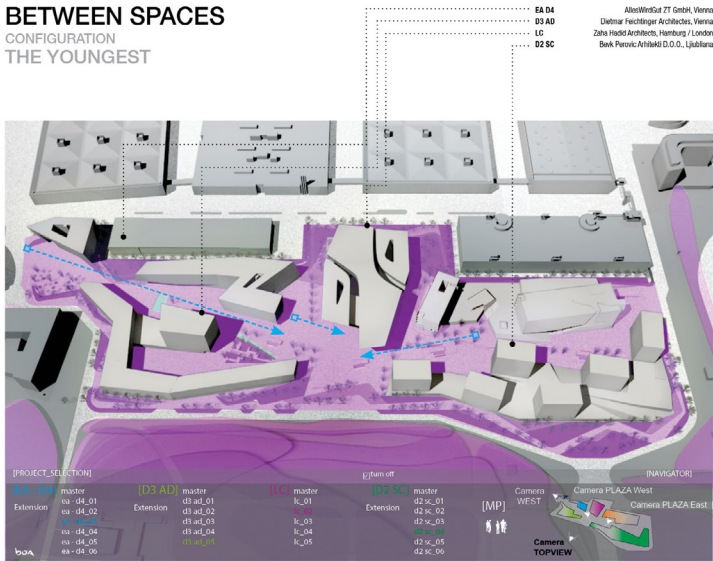
But the ties sought were not only emotional but also philosophical. I’m convinced that the fact that we mentioned that I had an anthroposophical background that marked my interpretation of the task in the submission for the project in the masterplan competition —when we were one of the three finalist candidates—was consciously registered by the rector. Christoph Badelt, as a father of three children with an anthroposophical background, found his mastermind in absolute synchrony. This no doubt meant that the

11. Dr. Michael Holoubek is a specialist in Public Law and currently Supreme Justice of the Constitutional Court of Austria.

12. Sommer, Christoph (2013) Representative manager of the WU in the BOA (Office for Advanced Randomness) film *A Vision Becomes Reality*.



**BETWEEN SPACES**  
CONFIGURATION  
THE YOUNGEST



**CONFIGURATION**  
THE HOME GAME

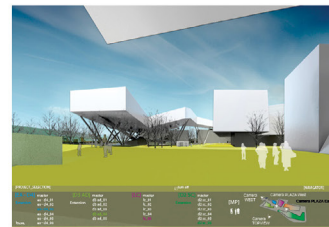
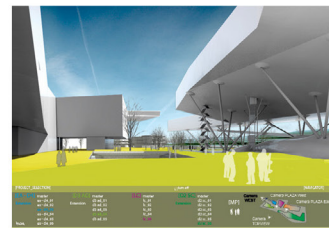
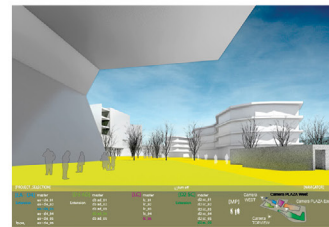
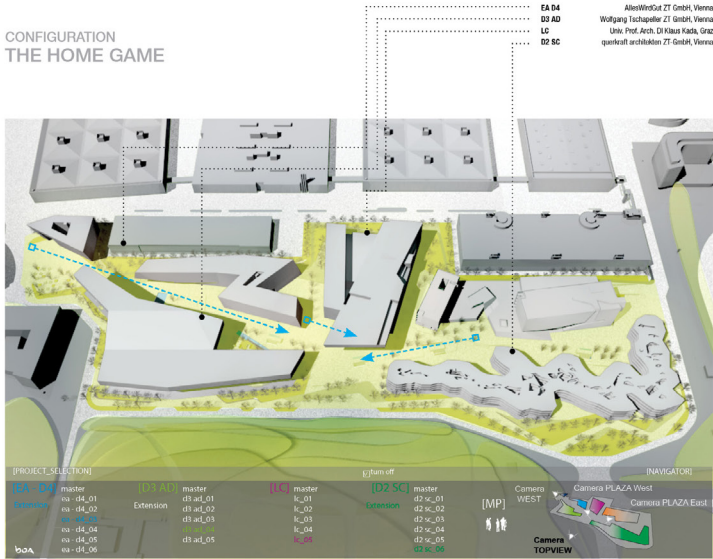


Image 14 and 15: Possible combinations visualized using the Urban Configurator  
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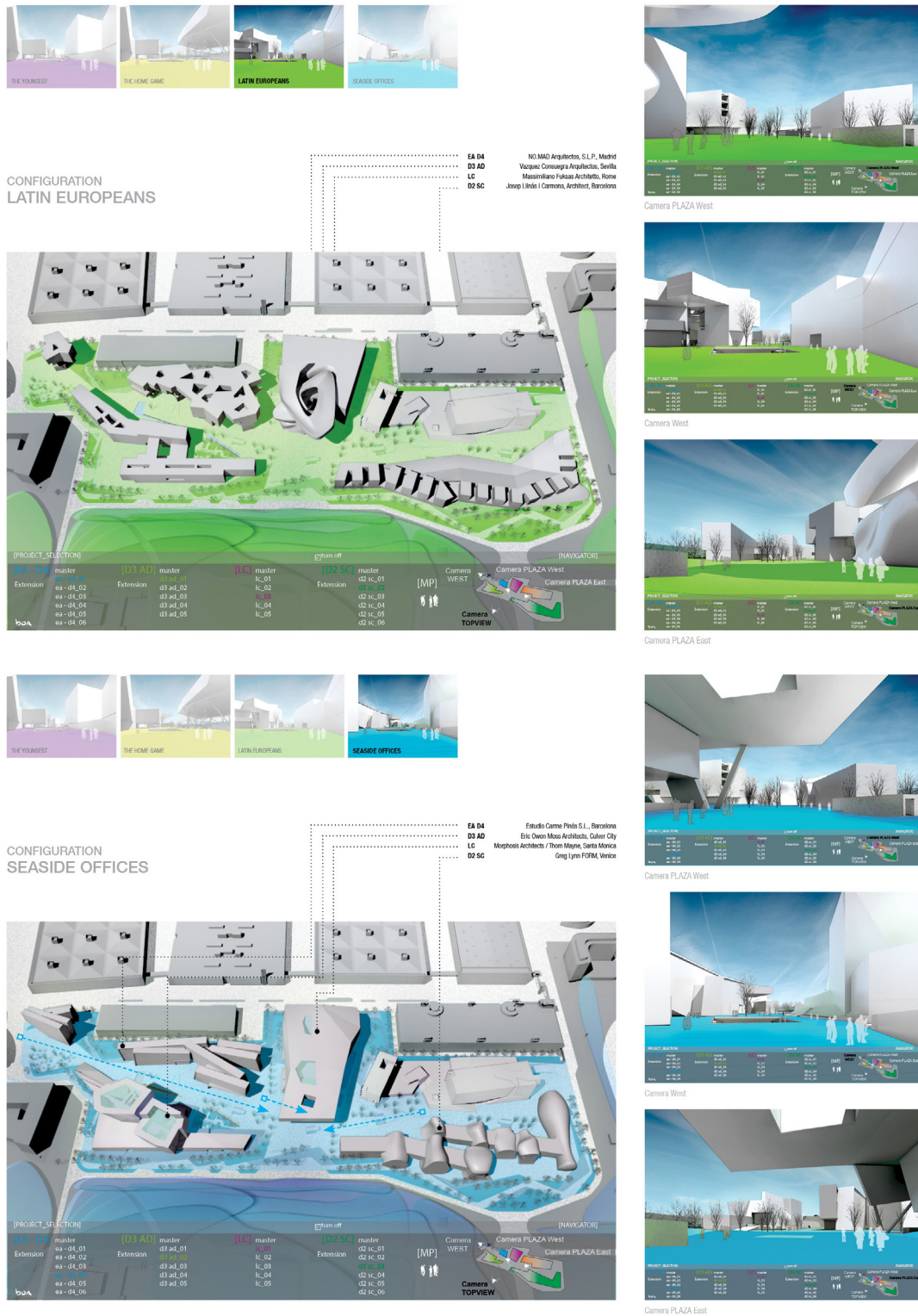


Image 14 and 15: Possible combinations visualized using the Urban Configurator  
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conceptual questions he asked me when starting to develop the masterplan were understood.

‘For the Campus you received the prestigious Gold Ring of Honour of the Vienna University of Economics. What did that moment feel like?’ ‘I was very emotional. The rector called me and told me he wanted the world to know who was the mastermind of his new home, and that to get that across he wanted to give me the greatest recognition the University can give, which had never before been awarded to

a woman, but had been awarded to six Nobel Prize-winning men.’<sup>13</sup>

It is no coincidence that in the pre-selection that was made in the public competition over three rounds for the architectural goals, both the WU and BIG insisted on inviting architects that had won the Pritzker Architecture Prize. Only those who had received the maximum recognition in global architecture could

13. Maslaton, Carlos Adrián (2015) *Orgullo Nacional en Viena*. Revista Nueva



Image 16: Diagrams of the masterplan at various moments in the process  
© Graph BOAnet



Image 17: Visualization of the Campus WU landscape pre-existent to the architectures  
© BUSarchitektur

match the ambitions of the highest symbolic valuation that the main building of the Campus WU had to have. Competing for the Study Centre and Library were project architects Thom Mayne Morphosis, Zaha Hadid and Hans Hollein. It was clear that the university was looking for a ‘cathedral’ as the main building of the Campus WU. And when Zaha Hadid’s image for the Central Library appeared in the jury, there were plenty of people who were willing to contribute money from their own pockets for such a superb building to be built in Vienna.

In my role as Masterplan Director, and when faced with the fear of responding to the University’s expectations with a Tower of Babel ‘interpreted as the mansion on high between heaven and Earth’<sup>14</sup> to access the Olympus of Knowledge, I developed a concept of evaluation that would also guarantee everyday life on the University campus and not just an object of sublime desire.

‘The architectural contest for the remaining four sites was offered to six internationally renowned architects, resulting in twenty-two projects of great interest and complexity, whose possible combinations would have to be evaluated in terms of their mutual influence and impact on the campus’ urban space.

At this point, BOA office for advanced randomness (member of the wider BUSarchitektur multi-enterprise group) developed a tool that enabled more than a thousand possible combinations to be analyzed, thereby making the jury’s evaluation easier but, above all, making it possible for those members of the jury who were not architects to formulate more informed opinions. BOA’s Dynamic Configuration Tool is a digital model that meant that different proposals for each site could be assembled, combined and then observed in real time, offering a bird’s eye view as well

14. Wikipedia Tower of Babel and the meaning of the Eternenanki concept to define the construction.

as numerous other pedestrian and aerial perspectives as desired. Everyone who saw the Configurator Tool working was left in no doubt as to this device’s remarkable power.’<sup>15</sup>

In short, the BUSarchitektur’s and BOA office for advanced randomness’s strategy for the campus to have the aura of value sought by the client was to have everyone become aware of the importance of the public space from the beginning for staging building projects designed by signature artists. The free space in the new Campus WU was environment and context for the architectural objects.

As an environment, it defined the margins and the intersections with the neighbouring area, as well as the spatial sequences to form a harmonious whole. As context, it constituted stations for active exchange and places for introverted research and learning.

Consequently, landscaping is understood as the pre-existence for the architectures of the university campus and the configurators as an example of practical application of how the concepts of randomness, holism and CoOpetition can interact to create new project instruments necessary for resolving complex projects and processes.

**Dr. Laura P. Spinadel**

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www.busarchitektur.com-www.boanet.at-www.holisticvillages.com  
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15. Diez, Fernando. (2013). *Campus WU. From Utopia to Reality Campus WU, A Holistic History*. Vienna, Austria: Editor BOA office for advanced randomness

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